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DELIVERED TO

THE CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF GLASGOW
AND GALLOWAY,

AT THE

TRIENNIAL VISITATION, AUGUST 29, 1855,
IN ST MARY'S CHURCH, GLASGOW,

BY THE

RIGHT REV. W. J. TROWER, D.D.

BISHOP OF GLASGOW AND GALLOWAY.

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CHARGE, &c.

REVEREND AND BELOVED BRETHREN,

In the early part of the year I submitted to your consideration some thoughts on those endless divisions of Christendom by which many minds are painfully perplexed, and also on the apparently partial fulfilment of such prophecies as seem to promise to the Church for ever a perfect unity and an unerring certainty.

I am very sensible that, in meditating long and earnestly on these very sacred subjects, it is not unlikely that the mind may over-estimate the value of the conclusions at which it may arrive. Under a sense, however, of the great responsibility which rests on any one called to my sacred office for endeavouring, by all means in his power, to promote the cause of peace and truth, I had for some time been anxious to call your attention to certain views on these subjects which had long commended themselves to my own mind as calculated, in these times of excitement and exaggeration, to sooth and satisfy any person who might have become unsettled and

uneasy with respect to the position of the Reformed Catholic Church; and having, in the form of a Pastoral Letter, suggested to you certain trains of thought which seem to me seasonable at this time, with respect to the divisions of the Church, I am the better able, on the occasion of my Triennial Visitation, to dwell with you on the state of the Diocese, and some other subjects of Ecclesiastical interest, and, I would hope, of mutual edification.

Having now, by the mercy of God, held my sacred office for nearly seven years, I have thought that it would be a suitable time for considering its present condition, with respect to progress, as compared with its state at former periods; and although, in a purely voluntary Church, there must always be many circumstances to cause anxiety—(indeed where is the Church, and when has there been any period of the Church, of which this might not be said?)—yet, on the whole, I think that the feelings resulting from a review of the progress of the Church in this Diocese during the Episcopate of my revered predecessor, as well as my own, will afford much ground for encouragement and thankfulness.

The Episcopate which preceded my own was a very remarkable one in the history of this Diocese, and even in the history of this Church. At my first Visitation (1849) I endeavoured, in some degree, to express my great respect for my predecessor's memory, and my sense of the very remarkable amount of blessing to his Diocese of which God had per-

mitted him to be the means. But every year that I have myself had experience of the difficulties which attend the Episcopate in Scotland, has deepened on my mind the impression, which it had then received, of his quiet and unpretending, but most untiring and munificent, exertions. Knowing, as I now know, by some not inconsiderable experience, the difficulty of eliciting zeal, of conciliating prejudices, and of inducing many minds to work together in harmony for the permanent establishment of even one new charge, I reflect with admiration, and with hearty desire to learn from his character and example the conditions of success in this blessed work, on the fact, that, while occupied with the cares and duties of a distant Incumbency, he was enabled to set on foot no less than ten distinct charges in this Diocese, most of them Incumbencies at the time of his decease. Previous to his Episcopate, he had been forward in aiding (always with open hand and heart) the establishment, or the extrication from difficulty, of several other congregations; and it was doubtless owing, under God, to the influence thus acquired, and to the love and veneration which were universally felt towards him, that he was enabled to effect so much while holding the office of Bishop. Into his labours it was my lot to enter. And while I was thankful to have, in the example of my predecessor, an instance of the rare combination of zeal and learning with gentleness and wisdom, I thought it not unlikely that after so considerable a progress a hull or

pause might ensue, and that it might be my own portion (during such time as I might myself be allowed to serve God in the office of your Bishop) rather to foster the charges set on foot by my predecessor, than to witness in my own day any similar increase. The spirit, however, which he was enabled to elicit has not declined. In several instances, each Incumbency established during the Episcopate of Bishop Russell has proved like leaven in its neighbourhood, notwithstanding the opposition unavoidably occasioned in many quarters by the increase of our congregations ; and notwithstanding the attacks which have been made from time to time, and even recently, on the validity of our Episcopal succession, as well as on the principle of Episcopacy itself.

Printed papers of this character have been extensively circulated in some parts of this Diocese ; but, on the whole, I have thought it best to abstain from controversial replies to these documents. It may at times be our bounden duty to give some short and simple answer to objections when proposed by candid enquirers ; but I believe for the most part the best answer to such attacks, is an honest endeavour to be true to the principles of our Church, both in life and doctrine, and then such attacks will do us no lasting injury. Our Church, by the Divine blessing, has continued peacefully to strike a deeper root, and bear more abundant fruits. I believe there are at this moment fourteen more clergymen at work in this Diocese than there were at my consecration, and the

number of strictly new charges is ten or eleven. At least eight new Schools have been set on foot. Four Churches have been consecrated, two of which were ready, or nearly ready, at the time of my predecessor's death. Another Church (not yet consecrated) has been built; and a building, formerly used as a Dissenting Chapel, having been purchased as a place of worship in the Diocese, has recently been made over for ever to the Church by the zealous layman who at first purchased it. Four excellent School-rooms, two of them licensed for Divine service, have been built; and three Parsonages built or provided. In three instances, Endowments have been provided on a scale before unknown in our Church since its impoverishment. If I were to go more into detail than seems to me advisable on the present occasion, it would be easy to adduce many other marks of progress of a most cheering and encouraging character. I cannot forbear from mentioning the increasing disposition and desire of members of our Communion to comply with the directions of the Prayer Book as to the public celebration of marriages and baptisms in Church, and the complete and entire observance of that most solemn and affecting formulary—the order for the Burial of the Dead. Were I speaking of the Church at large, many other encouraging signs of progress might of course be mentioned; but on a Diocesan Visitation, I speak only of such as may be observable in this Diocese. The number of persons confirmed, and the increase

of communicants, are always satisfactory and unmistakeable signs of progress.

To many persons this statement may after all seem such as can only be described as "the day of small things." If that were the case, yet Scripture cautions us against despising "the day of small things" in reference to the building of God's Temple.

To those, however, who estimate justly the difficulties of the case, I am persuaded that the results which I have mentioned will seem to be such as could not have been expected twenty years ago; and such as call upon all those who regard the Episcopal Church as the most faithful existing witness for Evangelical truth and Apostolic order, to give glory to God for what has been accomplished, and to go forward in their work in a spirit of thankfulness and trust. There are deeply-rooted prejudices to conciliate or overcome: there are many plausible reasonings to deal with, tenderly and charitably; and these not only as put forth by Christians of other communions, but also as influencing many persons, who, while they prefer the Episcopal system and Liturgical worship, yet view the question of introducing Episcopacy and the Prayer-Book as one of preference and expediency, rather than of duty. The attached members of our Church are scattered throughout the country in a manner which renders it very difficult to combine their action and their contributions in the establishment of new missions

or incumbencies ; and we must admit that the exaggerated statements and needlessly offensive practices of some, and the unhappy lapse to Romanism of others, have not only given a handle to objectors, but have furnished an excuse, to such as might be hesitating whether or not to attach themselves to our Communion, for withholding their adherence. Moreover, it must be remembered that our Church neither deals in the stern denunciation of those who reject her doctrines, which is not without influence in gaining proselytes ; nor does she sanction the use of such stimuli as are found in new and exciting practices, or in the exclusive and exaggerated enforcement of certain doctrines. It is not difficult to get proselytes to some popular and partial exhibition of Divine truth ; but such increase of numbers is no real proof of strength. For the most part it lasts only for a season, and is effected at the expense of the right proportion of faith, and the real consistency of the Christian character. Our Church neither says with the Church of Rome, in reference to her own Communion, “ *Nulla Salus extra Ecclesiam* ;” nor does she sanction those views which commend themselves to the pride of the human intellect and human heart, by proclaiming that every man may interpret the Bible for himself, without reference to the sense in which it had been received from the beginning, as attested in the Creed, and embodied in the Sacraments of the Church of God. Her spirit is mild, tolerant, and persuasive. Dread-

ing the effect of any false excitement or unhealthful stimulus, she appeals to the sober judgment, the candid and unimpassioned consideration of the world around her. Avoiding as much as may be the heated atmosphere and polemic spirit of controversy, she cleaves fondly to that which was from the beginning, and leads her children by the still waters of devotional exercises and reverent worship. Disclaiming the delusive though dazzling attribute of infallibility, she holds aloft (second only to the banner of the Cross) the principle of cleaving to historical and probable testimony. She enforces on her children, according to their intellectual capacity, the duty of candidly weighing (with reference to the various questions by which we are tried) the amount of probable and cumulative evidence; remembering that this is, in the nature of things, the only possible evidence (as in the case of Christianity itself, so also) in the case of various doctrines of Christianity; and that, instead of denying the existence of difficulties, we are responsible for setting faithfully over against any undeniable difficulty the overwhelming amount of probable and cumulative evidence in favour of the ancient Creed.

It is on this account, my Rev. Brethren, that we rejoice in the progress of our Church. It is not in that narrow and sectarian spirit which leads people to exult in the triumph of some party to which they may be attached by hereditary prejudices, or by long personal habit: It is not in the fierce and

fanatical temper of zealots, who compass sea and land to make one proselyte, without considering the effect of such change on the various relations in which he is Providentially placed: It is not as denying (God forbid) the amount of Christian truth and Christian holiness in the various Communions around us:—but it is because we believe our Church to witness, by her principles and practices, more faithfully than any of those Communions, to the ancient Truth and the evidence on which it rests:—It is because we believe her to take her stand on the only ground from which it is possible to contend logically and successfully against Popish error on the one side, and theological and latitudinarian error on the other:—It is because we believe (and we think experience has sufficiently shewn) that those Communions, with all their zeal and excellence (for which we thank God, and by which we desire to take example), yet unconsciously appeal to principles which, in the long run, would undermine the evidence for many essential doctrines which they hold in common with ourselves; nay, the evidence on which the genuineness and authenticity of the Scriptures of Truth can alone be defended. It is because we believe conscientiously that, in this age and country of religious excitement, when people are being blown about by every wind of doctrine—tossed to and fro on the waves of controversy—their spirits embittered—their peace destroyed—their moral beauty marred—by the temper of division, controversy, and un-

certainly, — we believe, I say, that the views of Divine Truth contained in the Book of Common Prayer present the safest guide into the haven of peace and truth; and that the increasing influence of that Book is the best security that the Bible itself (I do not mean the letter only of the Bible, but the sense and meaning of the Bible—the revelation of truth contained in the Bible—the actual and very remedy proclaimed in the Bible for human sin and human sorrow), will be faithfully handed on to coming ages, unimpaired and fresh as it was at the beginning. We believe that the progress of our Church is a token of return to calm and healthful habits of thought and feeling with respect to devotional practice, and with respect also to the nature of that evidence on which all that is precious to us ultimately rests; and therefore we thank God that He has called forth the ancient spirit of zeal and munificence within this Diocese (as well as elsewhere within this branch of the Church) in several remarkable instances; and we are encouraged to go forward in our work with patient expectation, with steadfast endurance of the trials and difficulties which are necessarily incident to a Church in our present circumstances; with firm resolution, by the grace of God, to be unprovoked by any asperities to bitter words or uncharitable feelings; while we will not flinch from humble but earnest endeavours to hand on to those around, and to those who shall come after, the sacred deposit which, by God's infinite

mercy, we have ourselves received. No doubt we must all expect our portion of anxiety and trial. In my own case those anxieties have been deepened by the private trial which prevents my continued residence, and which often suggests the question—Is it right to continue in an office demanding the whole devotion of time and energy, while Providentially hindered from residing among you? Your own united wish that I should continue to do so, is my consolation and support, and is itself, I trust, a happy and healthful token that such minor differences as may arise from time to time between a Bishop and his Clergy, have never impaired the mutual trust and affectionate regard which should always characterise our sacred relation. I have to thank you for the gratification which your confidence has afforded me in such trying circumstances, and to assure you that, whenever you may see reason to doubt whether the existing arrangement is the best for the Diocese, under a review of the whole case, I shall be neither hurt nor surprised by your informing me that this is your opinion.

The precarious footing of many of our missions must always be attended by anxiety. We must be subject to such events (surprising as it was) as occurred with respect to the chapel erected at Selkirk. It will always happen in a voluntary or unendowed Church, that funds will fluctuate; and some congregations will be in a feeble, while others are in a thriving condition. But such anxieties as

these are incident to the condition of the Church militant here on earth. And experience shows us that the existence, nay, the progress of our Church, consists with far greater trials than those over which we have now to mourn. Our part is to bear our testimony in our generation; endeavouring to maintain the truth, and serve our Master, and look to Him for blessing.

And here, my brethren, among the subjects which seem to me to call for some remark at this particular period, I would briefly direct your minds to the revival in our sister Church of England and Ireland of the deliberative functions of the Convocation of the Clergy, in the most important of her Provinces, and the bearing which such revival must have on many questions which affect our own, and even the American branches of the Reformed Catholic Church.

Valuing as we value the synodical action of our own Church, we cannot but regard with the deepest sympathy the deliberations of that venerable body, and the progress of public opinion in favour of the important movement, which has hitherto been conducted with so much wisdom and moderation. It is a matter of great thankfulness that this work has thus far been so conducted as to allay many apprehensions that were perhaps reasonably entertained; and our prayers should not be wanting that the Divine blessing may still attend a movement with which, indeed, we are not directly concerned, but which, from our close connection with the Church of

England, and our use of the English Book of Common Prayer, suggests many thoughts, not unattended with anxiety.

It is plain, for instance, to every one who reflects on what is going on, that the question of the admission of the Laity, under certain conditions, to the Synods of the Church, must sooner or later be mooted in that Assembly; and this cannot be the case without a great influence on the same question, with respect to the constitution of our own General and Diocesan Synods. The interest which was felt on this subject in our Church three years ago, has perhaps declined rather than increased; but it is well that, in times of comparative rest and peace, we should calmly prepare ourselves for the question, which sooner or later must come before us as a matter for practical determination. You are aware that I am myself favourable, under the present circumstances of the Church, to the admission of Laymen, under certain conditions, into her Synods. This opinion does not rest on any notion that the Laity have (inherently and indefeasibly) a right to such admission. But neither do I believe that even Presbyters have any such inherent, original, and indefeasible right. My own opinion (which I would express with much recollection of possible error), is, that all right of rule and legislation was lodged with the Apostolic College; and that it was by concession on their part that any others were (as at the council at Jerusalem) associated with them-

selves in the determination of questions. And I conceive that the Bishops of the Church, in a similar manner, if they believe the admission of the Laity to be advisable under the actual condition of the Church, may propose that admission under certain limitations, not on the principle of recognising a right on the part of the Laity, too long withheld, but on the principle of a reasonable and conditional concession, rendered both safe and advisable from the progress of time, and the actual circumstances of the Church, and the spread of education. And as Presbyters, once admitted by concession to share in synodical action, have afterwards a prescriptive right of which the Bishops could not deprive them ; so I believe that the Laity, once admitted, will, in a similar manner, acquire rights of a prescriptive though not of an inherent nature to a stated and limited share in the legislation of the Church,—care being taken not only to preserve the original deposit of the Faith for ever inviolate, but also to provide for the decision of such doctrinal questions as might by implication affect it, by purely Ecclesiastical Courts. Some well considered scheme, by which the Laity might have a share in the election of Bishops, seems to me also much wanted in this Church.

But the subject which comes home more nearly to our feelings and apprehension than any thing which affects only the constitution of our Synods is the recommendation presented to Convocation in the report of a very weighty committee appointed by

that venerable Synod in favour of a new arrangement of the offices of the Church, and some other important changes. It does not, of course, follow that this Church should adopt all or any of the modifications of this sort of her present use which may be proposed by an English Convocation ; but still any advice emanating from a body of such authority in England on so delicate and grave a subject must have a serious influence on Scottish Churchmen ; and without entering at length on questions which do not immediately concern us, I commend what is going on to your serious reflection, and to your habitual prayers. It is satisfactory that all parties agree in retaining the whole of the existing Offices, Liturgy, and Litany of the English Prayer-Book—though the Report recommends a somewhat different arrangement and division : on which I will only remark, that it seems to me, on the whole, more suited for the circumstances of the English Church than for those of our own. In some respects this Church has either adopted, or has the means of adopting, without difficulty, some of the recommendations of the Committee. Thus, 1. By our 17th Canon we admit parents as sponsors for their own children in Holy Baptism. 2. We are enabled to introduce, by the authority of the Bishops, occasional prayers and thanksgivings into the order for morning and evening prayer ; and there is nothing to hinder us from giving at least Diocesan authority to some form for the institution of incumbents, or other solemn occasions. 3. I think it well

to call your attention to the admonition prefixed to the Second Book of Homilies, with respect to the power of selecting other chapters than those which may fall in order to be read on Sundays and Holidays. The authority of this admonition is over-ridden in England by the Act of Uniformity ; but I conceive that, in consequence of our subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles, it has full authority among ourselves. My attention was first called to the fact by one of my present clergy, and I see that people are elsewhere noticing the importance of the principle thus sanctioned. It is there said, " And whereas it may so chance some one or other chapter of the Old Testament to fall in order to be read upon the Sundays or other Holidays, which were better to be changed with some other of the New Testament of more edification, it shall be well done to spend your time, and consider well of such chapters beforehand, whereby your prudence and diligence may appear, so that your people may have cause to glorify God for you." I am not mentioning this with a view to your acting upon it without Episcopal advice and sanction ; but for the purpose of shewing that we recognise a principle which is of great importance. I should think myself justified, in virtue of this legal document, and of the spirit and principle involved in it, in sanctioning the reading of chapters taken from Inspired Scripture, instead of chapters from the Apocrypha, on Holidays ; and perhaps in adopting the lessons from Inspired Scripture in the Calendar

of the Scottish Prayer-Book of King Charles I., instead of the Apocryphal lessons, between September 27 and November 23.

With reference to another point, I may mention that I should have no hesitation in authorising the use of the Litany with a sermon as a third service in populous places. I believe that we shall never regain our hold on the poor, without relaxation of the stiffness of our system in respect of preaching only after the full service of the Church, nor yet without the adoption of such hymns as are aids in congregational devotion, in addition to the use of the ancient versions of the Psalms. And if in any place the clergy find that the managers or trustees of Chapels are averse to allow their use for the benefit of the poor in services of this kind, I think that they should use their influence, temperately but earnestly, to convince such persons of the want of charity unconsciously shewn in such objections. It is the very glory and characteristic of a Church to preach the Gospel to the poor.

There are many other subjects on which, if time allowed, I should wish to urge your continued and earnest exertion. The wants of the Church Society. The Friendly Society for the widows and relatives of the clergy. The promotion of schools. The recollection of the claims of the Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts. The very important rule about to be adopted by the Church Society, and which I recommend most earnestly to your sup-

port, with a view to promote, and indeed enforce the endowment of Churches. In every Church, whether or not deriving aid from the Church Society, there ought to be a regular Endowment Fund, of which the congregation should be periodically reminded.

Not wishing, however, to occupy your time and attention too long on the present occasion, I will, in conclusion, address only one solemn word to you and to myself,—

“PHYSICIAN, HEAL THYSELF.”

It is a word often spoken in bitterness by those who fret against the warnings of their Spiritual Pastors, or expect in them an angelical perfection not to be looked for in the present state of things. But yet it is a word which we should all take to our own hearts, remembering how grievous is the scandal, how great the injury, not to our Church only, but to religion itself, when those who profess to be guides, themselves are led astray; and those who are set to be watchmen, themselves are supine and slothful. In particular, it is felt that those who claim a call and a mission more apostolic and authoritative than can be claimed in other communions, ought to shew by their personal habits, and by their devoted lives, that the grace of orders has a blessed influence, not marked by haughty assumption of the ministerial prerogatives, but by a more lowly and gentle disposition to become the servants of all men. We have not in this country the influence which arises from

secular rank and large expenditure, and homes that realise in many an English village the fairest dreams of earthly happiness ; while they are the centres also of wide-spreading benevolence and pastoral effort. Long may England be characterised by such blessed resting-places of pure and undefiled religion through the length and breadth of her land ! But we may have in an equal, nay, we might have in a still greater degree, the influence which arises from burning zeal and meek patience, from a single eye and unsecular mind—from the spirit that is not easily provoked—from the willingness to spend and be spent in our Master's service. This is the true source of a Pastor's influence. And this is the gift of God, poured down on those who most obediently lay themselves out to do His will, and by whom invisible things are most habitually realised as motives to daily exertion and self-denial. Men do feel that he who proclaims a remedy for sin and sorrow, ought himself to be an instance of the efficacy of that remedy ;—in sorrow, patient and trustful, like one whose treasure is above ;—in prosperity, humble and diligent, like one who knows its uncertainty, and is pressing towards the goal ;—unworldly when his own interest is at stake ;—meek under irritating usage ;—devout, and temperate, and pure ;—a living epistle of his blessed Master, known and read of all men :—an instance of the degree in which the plague of the heart may be healed, and the bitter waters may be sweetened. Then can we speak persuasively

to others to taste and try the remedy, when we speak from personal experience of its blessed power, commending it to them with a conviction which they perceive can spring from nothing short of that experience, and when, notwithstanding some signs and traces of the original evil, they see plainly that the old man has indeed received his death-wound, and the new man is being gradually formed in us ; when they see no swelling self-conceit—no vain-glorious self-display—no preaching of ourselves in the place of Christ—no carnal end—no faithless and wilful inconsistency ; but the love of Christ and the love of souls. God pardon us, my brethren, who for the most part (each of us will own it of himself) so far come short. God enable us to look to the True Brazen Serpent lifted up in the wilderness, till the deadly plague indeed is healed. Let us live with that word before our minds—“ Physician, heal thyself ;” and remember that the unmistakeable tokens of spiritual health in ourselves, are one essential condition of ministering to others the true and sufficient remedy.





